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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001297

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH UNODC DIRECTOR

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (SBU) On February 3, Ambassador met with Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and local UNODC representative Ambassador Sandro Calvani on the margins of the international cooperation meeting in Cartagena. Ambassador expressed concern about the recent publication on the UNODC website of claims that aerial eradication was only a temporary solution to drug cultivation in Colombia, and that it is now one-third less effective in terms of coca sprayed and destroyed than it was a year ago. He asked Costa if this information had been discussed with the Colombian National Police (CNP), because neither the Embassy or any entity of the USG had been consulted regarding the content of the report. Calvani said the UN had not issued a new report and had no plans to do so. The information on the website was put there mistakenly when the UNODC office in Bogota was transferring slides -- some of which were incorrect -- to UNODC headquarters in Vienna. Regarding the website's reference to aerial eradication as a "temporary" solution, Calvani explained that it was caused by the writer's imperfect English; the author meant that coca farmers often replant and that areas must often be sprayed more than once. Neither Calvani nor anyone at mission headquarters approved the incorrect slides. He apologized for the error, said the slides had been removed from the website, and promised a full explanation in writing.

2. (C) Ambassador and Costa agreed for better coordination and closer cooperation on issues such as data comparison and analysis. Costa noted European nations' general aversion to aerial eradication, while Ambassador observed that security concerns make manual eradication extremely difficult, leaving aerial eradication as the safest and most cost-effective means of combating the problem in most cases. Costa said he personally supports aerial eradication, and since President Uribe is committed to it, the UN supports it as well. He added that the UN is not as concerned with the method of eradication as it is with the bigger question of how much coca is actually on the ground.

3. (C) Ambassador asked Costa to inform the USG and Embassy directly if UNODC's policy changed to one hostile to aerial eradication and emphasizing manual eradication. Costa said UNODC has no specific reasons to oppose aerial eradication, saying it comprises half of the counternarcotics strategy, the other half being assistance to farmers. He said European donations were limited in Colombia and expressed his gratitude for the NAS funding UNODC has received.

WOOD